

SAFETY COUNTERMEASURE

NINE MOTORCYCLE FATALITIES IN APRIL

An accident occurred this week, outside of Chievres, on rue de Ath (RN 56) in Lens, Belgium, when the Service Member attempted to maneuver a curve. His motorcycle slid out from underneath him. Fortunately, the SM was lucky enough not to be injured or require medical assistance. However, not all of the motorcyclists are so lucky and most of the motorcycle accidents will end tragically, as the one below which occurred last month outside of Camp Darby, when the SM, an experienced motorcyclist, attempted to pass at high speed with oncoming traffic. He was killed on impact.



We have lost nine brothers in arms in the last thirty days due to motorcycle accidents. USAREUR is not immune to motorcycle accidents as we have had two fatalities this fiscal year and four last year. With the exception of one accident, all riders were considered “experienced.” All but two had attended the proper training courses. Of the nine, three were hit by other drivers, five simply lost control of the bike and one fatality was attributed to driving under the influence. Speed was the contributing factor in all but two of these accidents.

LESSONS LEARNED:

? Not all motorcycles are created equal. Every rider knows that all bikes have their own handling characteristics, different gear ratios, horsepower and response to throttle tendencies and stopping distance requirements. You may have been riding for years but how experienced are you on the bike you are currently riding? Driving any vehicle forms habits, good or bad, to compensate for the tendencies of the vehicle under different conditions. Have you overcome the habits learned on the old bike or have you transferred them to the new? In an emergency the chances are that your reactions will be based on habit and you may find that your bike doesn’t respond as you expected simply because it is not the same bike. Slow your speed until you have mastered the bike you are riding and know that the bike will perform as expected in given situations.

? The wearing of a proper helmet is a must, even if just riding around the block. The leading cause of motorcycle fatalities is head trauma.

? Driving defensively at all times is a must for any vehicle driver but is critical to safe motorcycle operation. Decrease speed when entering intersections, even if you have the right of way. Curves are especially dangerous on any motorcycle as the physics affecting the bike and the rider change dramatically. Of greater importance is that in many instances the rider cannot see what is ahead. A pothole or an animal in the roadway are not a great impediment to a four wheel vehicle but can spell disaster to a two wheeled vehicle. Enter curves cautiously. Slow down!

? Enjoy your bike this summer but always Drive to Arrive!
USAG BENELUX Installation Safety Office